

NUTRITION SERVICES DIVISION MANAGEMENT BULLETIN		No. 01-101
TO:	School Nutrition Program Sponsors County Superintendents of Schools Diocesan Superintendents of Schools	ISSUE DATE: April 2001
ATTENTION:	Food Service Directors	
SUBJECT:	School Meal Applications and Direct Certification During the Operation of Provisions 2 and 3	

This Management Bulletin provides guidance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture regarding the collection of household eligibility information by National School Lunch and Breakfast Program sponsors during the operation of Provision 2 or Provision 3. These provisions reduce the collection of meal applications to once every four or five years.

1) If a sponsor operating under Provision 2 or 3 collects and processes meal applications from households and/or conducts direct certification during a non-base year, does the sponsor have to use the information?

Yes. Once households have completed applications or an agency has submitted direct certification data for the purpose of meal benefits, the sponsor must utilize the eligibility information and conduct meal counting and claiming by eligibility type (free, reduced price, or paid) at the point of service during that school year. This becomes the new base year, and the new claiming percentages are calculated and applied for the term of the new cycle.

Exception: An exception is allowed when the sponsor does not operate Provision 2 or 3 for all meal programs. For example, a sponsor may operate the lunch program under Provision 2 and collect eligibility once every four years during the base year, while collecting eligibility information annually under standard practices for the breakfast program.

2) May a sponsor operating under Provision 2 or 3 use a meal application or continue to conduct direct certification during the non-base years for other purposes such as Title 1 or textbook assistance?

No. An application used to collect information for purposes other than meal benefits may not be labeled as a meal application or give any indication that meal benefits are contingent upon a household returning the application. Nor may food service account funds be used to pay the cost of collecting information for other benefits. **The National School Lunch Act authorizes direct certification only for the purpose of determining meal eligibility.**

3) May a sponsor operating under Provision 2 or 3 collect meal applications and/or direct certification data during non-base years for the purpose of requesting an extension of the provision?

Yes, but only during the last year of the provision cycle. During the final year of the cycle, the sponsor may collect free and reduced price meal applications and/or conduct direct certification to determine socioeconomic data regarding the school's population for purposes of requesting an extension of the provision.

Sponsors are further reminded that if they elect to return to standard claiming practices, they should carefully plan collection of new eligibility information in the first year following the end of the provision cycle to avoid any loss of reimbursement.

If you have questions, please contact your regional Division representative, Field Services Unit, at (916) 323-4558 or (800) 952-5609.

Marilyn Briggs, Director
Nutrition Services Division
Assistant Superintendent of Public Instruction

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